

Speaking Roles

Each speaker has a particular role within a debate and must follow the procedures associated with their position. **Note: if you sign up for any position and consequently have to cancel, you are responsible to find a replacement.**

Speaker

The Speaker is responsible for ensuring that the debate is conducted in an orderly and effective manner. The Speaker is required to know the rules and procedures of debate and to assist and direct debaters who deviate from these guidelines. The Speaker must remain impartial during the entire debate.

In general, the Speaker has the following duties:

- **NEW:** Ensures that roles for the debate are filled. If not filled one week prior, is responsible to contact members and ask them to participate in the required positions.
- **NEW:** Reviews the definition of the motion to certify that it is debatable.
- Chairs the debate.
- Calls each debater to the podium.
- Rules on procedural violations.
- Concludes the debate and calls on the adjudicator(s) to give critique.

[Read the comprehensive Speaker's guide.](#)

The Prime Minister

The Prime Minister is responsible for defining the terms in the resolution and presenting and defending a sufficient case for the resolution. The case is made up of the arguments a debater uses to further his or her case and persuade the audience. The PM then presents evidence to back up each argument in the form of reasoning, examples, statistics, case studies, facts and any other material that attempts to further the case.

The elements of a persuasive argument are that they be:

- Relevant to the issues of the debate.
- They should be developed logically in order to be clear and well reasoned and therefore plausible. The conclusion of all arguments should support the member's case.
- Debaters should ensure that the matter they present is consistent within their speech and their team.

In Parliamentary debate, the Prime Minister outlines the motion at the beginning of his or her speech and defines the meaning of any terms in the motion which require interpretation. The definitions provided must have a clear and logical link to the motion. In addition the definition must be debatable that is not so narrowly defined as to restrict the ability of the opposing team to reasonably debate the motion.

NEW: The Prime Minister must provide this definition to the Speaker prior to the debate (the earlier the better) such that the Speaker may certify that it is indeed debatable.

Final Affirmation:

As the proposer of the motion, the PM has the final say in the debate. This final appeal is vital to the Government's cause. The Speaker should briefly rebut the case presented by the Opposition and then compellingly reaffirm the Government's position. As for the last few minutes of the Opposition's speech, no new arguments may be presented, though new evidence in support of old arguments is permissible as is evidence in direct refutation of anything presented by the Opposition.

Leader of the Opposition (LO)

The Leader of the Opposition has three responsibilities:

- First, the definition of the resolution proposed by the PM must be accepted or rejected. Acceptance of the definition may be tacit, but to reject the definition a formal refusal must be made. The definition may be rejected only if it is wholly undebatable. Having explained why he/she believes the resolution as defined to be undebatable, he/she should request a ruling from the Speaker of the House. If the Government definition is renounced, the member must propose another definition and proceed to debate on this topic. The members of the Government must then adopt the definition proposed by the Opposition.
- Once the topic of debate has been clarified, the member proceeds to refute the case presented by the Government. He/she may refute either the examples which support the Government's case, the thrust of the case itself (by presenting examples of his/her own) or the philosophical premise on which the case is built. He/she may also choose to counter the Government in all three levels.
- The LO final responsibility is to introduce the counter case if there is to be one. On judging sheets, the Opposition are awarded points both for their refutation of the Government's case and for their own arguments against the resolution.

Final Rebuttal:

As the final speaker for the Opposition, the LO should concentrate on rebutting the main thrust of the Government's case and reaffirm the Opposition's case. During this rebuttal, the speaker is not permitted to introduce new evidence to support or refute previous arguments.

Member For the Government

The Member for the Government has two tasks:

- He/she must refute the arguments brought forward by the LO, which again may be argued at the level of evidence, argument or premise. Elements used in this refutation must be consistent with the rest of the Government's case.
- The bulk of the Member's speech should be devoted to elaborating the case presented by the Prime Minister. Ideally, the case will have been thoroughly developed before the debate begins and the points in support of the argument divided between the two members. The member should never contradict the Prime Minister. Generally the member is awarded a greater proportion of his/her score on the bases of his/her constructive argument rather than his/her refutation.

Member of the Opposition

The Member of the Opposition has three responsibilities:

- Summarizing the principle arguments and their development through the course of the debate.
- Refute the case of the Government, supporting arguments proposed by his/her colleague, the LO.
- The final responsibility of the Member is to expand on the Opposition case, reaffirming the position presented by the LO.

Note:

During the last several minutes of his/her speech, the Member for the Opposition should introduce no new arguments.